

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend Claims 1, 3, 4, 14, 15, 20, 23:

1. (Currently Amended) A metallic, small opening beverage can end closure adapted for receiving and retaining a drinking straw, comprising:

a circular end wall;

a central panel integrally interconnected to said end wall;

5 a substantially non-detachable pull tab hingedly interconnected to an upper surface of said central panel;

a rupturable score line positioned on said central panel and defining a substantially circular opening having a diameter no greater than about ~~0.4375~~0.3125 inches which is adapted for receiving the drinking straw, the drinking straw having an outer diameter substantially no greater than said  
10 substantially circular opening; and

a vent opening positioned adjacent said substantially circular opening to provide venting in said small opening beverage can end closure during use, wherein when the straw is positioned in said small opening beverage can end closure a portion of the drinking straw engages said substantially circular opening to retain the drinking straw within said small opening beverage can end closure and  
15 to substantially prevent upward and downward travel of the drinking straw within said substantially circular opening.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Currently Amended) The small opening beverage can end closure of Claim 1, further comprising a reinforcing bead positioned proximate to a hinge line interconnecting said tab to said upper surface of said central panel to further inhibit detachment of said tab from said central panel.

4. (Currently Amended) The small opening beverage can end closure of Claim 1, wherein said vent opening provides at least about 0.0004 inches of venting area when said substantially circular opening is occupied by the straw.

5. (Currently Amended) The small opening beverage can end closure of Claim 1, further comprising at least one embossing bead positioned proximate to a termination point of said score line to further inhibit detachment of said tab from said upper surface of said central panel.

6. (Currently Amended) The small opening beverage can end closure of Claim 1, wherein said tab is further interconnected to said upper surface of said central panel within said rupturable score line with a rivet.

7. (Currently Amended) The small opening beverage can end closure of Claim 1, wherein said substantially circular opening is created in said central panel by pulling said pull ring in one direction only.

8. (Currently Amended) The small opening beverage can end closure of Claim 1, wherein the beverage can end is substantially spill-proof when said substantially circular opening is occupied by the straw.

9. (Currently Amended) The small opening beverage can end closure of Claim 1, wherein said central panel is oriented at a substantially right angle to a vertical orientation of a beverage can body.

10. (Currently Amended) The small opening beverage can end closure of Claim 1, wherein at least a portion of said pull ring is elevated ~~at least about 0.030 inches from~~ above said upper surface of said central panel to facilitate grasping.

11. (Currently Amended) The small opening beverage can end closure of Claim 1, wherein said pull tab comprises a pull ring on one end and a nose on an opposite end, said nose hingedly interconnected to said upper surface of said central panel.

12. (Currently Amended) The small opening beverage can end closure of Claim 1, wherein said rupturable score line is positioned proximate to a central region of said central panel.

13. (Currently Amended) The small opening beverage can end closure of Claim 1, further comprising a raised reinforcing bead which substantially encircles said small opening to shroud a leading edge of said substantially circular opening.

14. (Previously Amended) A metallic beverage can end closure with a small opening adapted for receiving and retaining a drinking straw, comprising:

a circular end wall;

a central panel integrally interconnected to said end wall;

5 a score line positioned on said central panel which defines said small opening, said score line having a surface area no greater than about 0.1503 square inches;

a substantially non-detachable tab having a pull ring on one end and a nose on an opposite end, said nose hingedly interconnected to an upper surface of said central panel, wherein when a force is applied to said pull ring said small opening is created in said central panel;

a rivet further interconnecting said nose to said upper surface of said central panel within said score line; and

a vent opening further defined by said score line which is positioned adjacent said small opening to provide adequate ventilation in said can end when said small opening is occupied by the straw, wherein the drinking straw has an exterior diameter adapted to frictionally engage an internal diameter of said small opening upon insertion of the straw to substantially prevent upward and downward travel of the drinking straw after insertion in the small opening.

15. (Currently Amended) The beverage can end closure of Claim 14, wherein said vent opening has a minimal cross-sectional area of at least about 0.0004 inches .

16. (Currently Amended) The beverage can end closure of Claim 14, further comprising a reinforcing bead positioned adjacent at least a portion of said score line.

17. (Currently Amended) The beverage can end closure of Claim 14, wherein said score line extends beyond a hinge line of said nose and said upper surface of said central panel to further inhibit said tab from becoming inadvertently detached from said central panel.

18. (Currently Amended) The beverage can end closure of Claim 14, wherein said tab pull ring has a smooth upper surface and a smooth lower surface which are substantially void of sharp edges.

19. (Currently Amended) The beverage can end closure of Claim 14, further comprising a raised reinforcing bead which substantially shrouds said centrally disposed small opening.

20. (Currently Amended) The combination of a metallic beverage can end closure with a small opening and a drinking straw adapted for insertion and retention therein, the combination comprising:

a circular end wall adapted for interconnection to a beverage can body;

a central panel integrally interconnected to said circular end wall;

a substantially centrally disposed circular opening defined by a score line; having a first diameter no greater than about ~~0.4375 inches~~ an external diameter of said drinking straw;

a tab having a pull ring on a first end and a nose on a second end, said nose pivotally interconnected to an upper surface of said central panel at a first location and non-detachably interconnected to said upper surface of central panel with a rivet; and

said drinking straw having an ~~exterior~~ external diameter with at least a portion which is substantially equivalent to said first diameter of said substantially centrally disposed circular opening, wherein when said drinking straw is inserted into said substantially centrally disposed circular opening said drinking straw is substantially restricted from travel within said substantially centrally disposed circular opening as a result of frictional engagement with an edge of said substantially centrally disposed circular opening;

a vent opening positioned proximate to said small opening and said drinking straw for allowing ventilation into said can while a beverage is being extracted through said drinking straw.

21. (Currently Amended) The metallic beverage can end closure and drinking straw combination of Claim 20, further comprising a reinforcing bead positioned proximate to a termination point of said score line to further inhibit detachment of said tab.

22. (Currently Amended) The metallic beverage can end closure and drinking straw combination of Claim 20, further comprising extending a score termination point beyond a hinge line where said nose is pivotally interconnected to said upper surface of said central panel to inhibit detachment of said tab.

23. (Currently Amended) The metallic beverage can end closure and drinking straw combination of Claim 20, wherein said vent opening has a cross-sectional area of at least about 0.0004 square inches.

24. (Currently Amended) The metallic beverage can end closure and drinking straw combination of Claim 20, wherein said drinking straw has a corrugated mid-section which facilitates bending.